

## *Early GJ settler, born a slave, was noted orchardist*



*Elijah and Nicey Hines, Harry Butler's great-grandparents.  
Harry Butler photo collection*

By Kathy Jordan

Today when Harry Butler and his family go to church on Saturday at Handy Chapel they are carrying on a family tradition that started in 1892 when his great-uncles, John, Samuel, and Clark Hines, worshipped at the church.

Harry's great-uncles came here in 1888 from Cameron, Mo. They were the sons of Elijah Hines, a black man born into slavery, and his wife, Nancy.

Mesa County property records show that John and Samuel purchased 10 acres on May 13, 1891. The two men started clearing the land for what became known as one of the best places in the valley to purchase fruit.

Harry said that when he was a small child his grandmother, Ione Hines Taylor, would take him for a ride and show him the orchard site. It is the current location of Orchard Avenue Elementary School.

Elijah was born a slave in Fairbanks, Va., March 1, 1844. When Elijah was 18 years old the owner of his plantation died, and his wife moved to Missouri, taking the slaves with her.

Elijah joined Company 11 of the 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Missouri, United States Army, in its first call for volunteers and fought throughout the Civil War for the Union side, receiving an honorable discharge. He later became a member of John A. Logan Post, Grand Army of the Republic, in Grand Junction.

After the war Elijah married his first wife, Nancy Matthews, in September 1866. They had four children, John, Samuel, Clark and Millie. Nancy died in 1876.

On Jan. 25, 1887, Elijah married Nicey McDonald of Cameron, Mo. They had three children, Oreta, Marcus and Ione, all born in Missouri.

In 1901 Elijah Hines and his family joined his three sons in Grand Junction.

Elijah purchased the farm from Samuel and John, and that is where Elijah and Nicey raised Oreta, Marcus, Millie (his first wife's daughter) and Ione.

Nicey, like Elijah, was born a slave in Fairfax, Va. She was separated from her parents and siblings when they were sold to other slave owners. Nicey died in 1941 in Grand Junction, and her funeral took place at Handy Chapel.

Elijah was well respected by the community and his death was front -page news when he died in April 1925. The story read that with the death of Elijah Hines, "the city lost one of its oldest as well as one of the best of its fruit growers in the valley this morning. So upright and honorable was his attitude to all men that he won and merited their confidence and esteem. There are no better men than Elijah Hines and he will be sincerely mourned by all who have had the good fortune to become acquainted with him."

The story continued: "Mr. Hines was a member of the First African Methodist Church and had been for many years and was also a member of the Masonic fraternity and he was no doubt the very oldest member of both of these organizations living in Grand Junction."

His funeral was held at Handy Chapel, as had been the earlier ones of his sons, Samuel, who died in 1906, and Clark, who died in 1908.

John Hines, son of Elijah and Nicey, died March 29, 1920, six days after he was thrown from his wagon. Because John had such wide experience with horses and wagons, his family questioned how the accident had happened. But nothing sinister was ever uncovered.

The obituary in The Daily Sentinel read that John, "was hauling water when his team took fright and started to run. Mr. Hines was thrown from his seat on the wagon to between the horses. The wagon passed over him, dragging him for some distance. He was at once removed to his home and physicians summoned. An examination showed that no bones had been broken and it was thought that he had suffered only a number of severe bruises."

When Marcus, the son of Elijah and Nicey, died in 1945 that was last of Hines men in Mesa County, but not the last of the Hines family.

Next week Harry Butler grows up in Grand Junction.

